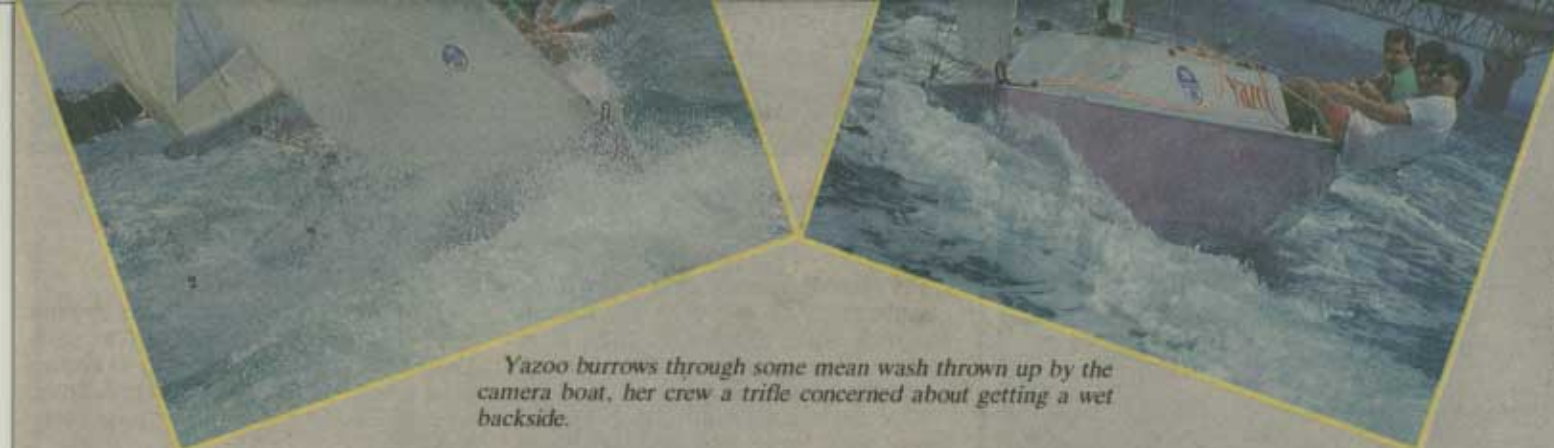




YAZOO — here's
fast fun
without
a big
price tag

Up and humming — the driver of the camera boat had to really wind the throttle to catch the little Elliott.





Yazoo burrows through some mean wash thrown up by the camera boat, her crew a trifle concerned about getting a wet backside.

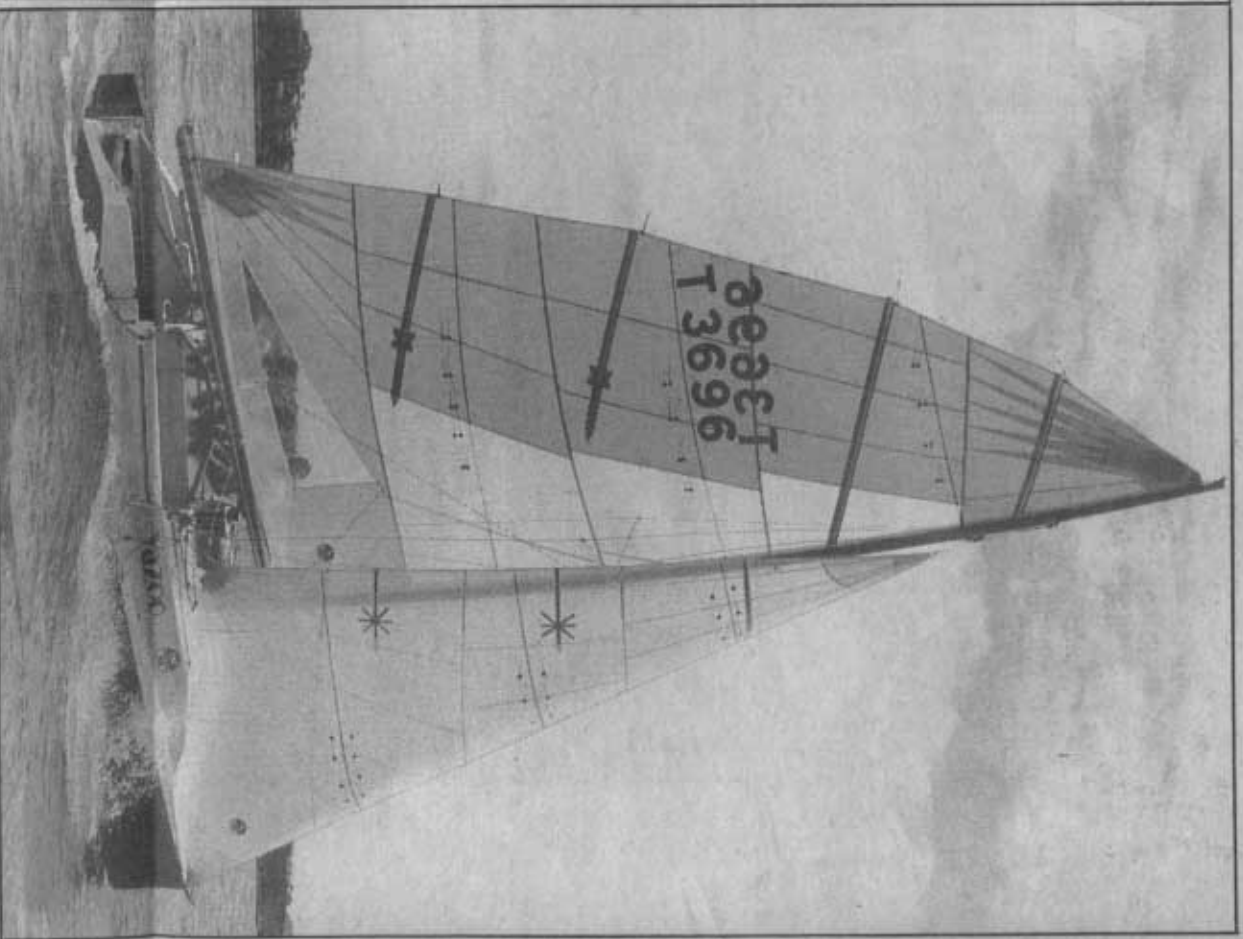
The crew needed no second invitation when asked out for a sail aboard what is arguably New Zealand's fastest trailer yacht, the Elliott 6.5, Yazoo.



This Elliott 6.5 shows why she holds the scratch handicap with the New Zealand Trailer Yacht Association.



Yazoo proved surprisingly stiff on the wind, heeling quickly to this angle before crew and centreboard bulb settle the yacht solidly in the groove.



Very quickly into the groove, Yazoo was an impressive windward performer.

As New Zealand's champion trailer yacht in 1987-88 and 1988-89, Richard McGee's little cedar-strip flyer is regularly seen scorching across Auckland's Waitemata Harbour.

Our chosen test sail day could not have been more perfect. With the breeze 10-15 knots out of the northeast and cloud rapidly giving way to a perfect summer's afternoon, there were few disappointed that they'd skipped work for the *Boating* evaluation.

With a yacht of impressive manoeuvrability the little 5hp Yamaha stayed home in the car, Yazoo being sailed straight from the launching ramp, through Westhaven's moored

fleet and out onto the harbour.

First serious point of sail was upwind and, hey, it's quite important to stick those toes under the toestrap to secure your tenure on the windward rail. Once so positioned, it is actually quite comfortable.

Sailing

Once settled on the wind, Yazoo sailed very high and surprisingly fast for a yacht of her size. The new kevlar/mylar North sails did their work admirably, the Elliott slotting into an easy groove, requiring little concentration—or effort—to stay there. The helm never required more than finger-tip force.



Putting her through the washing machine. The Elliott 6.5 emerges from the vast turbulence thrown up by the camera boat, the only casualty being a wet backside for the for'ard hand.

Although adopting an unusual bow-high appearance whilst on the wind, Yazoo obviously enjoys this attitude, climbing easily and very efficiently through the slight harbour chop. The clean, flat wake astern, in marked contrast to the photography boat, a sure sign of a sweet hull design.

Yazoo was surprisingly stiff. The yacht obviously has a preferred angle of heel, and whilst initially heeling rapidly settles solidly once crew weight and centreboard bulb takeover.

Now for the fun part. Bearing away in pursuit of the camera boat, the baby Elliott accelerates rapidly, planing up

quickly on the photographers while only two-sail reaching.

Up goes the spinnaker and it's instant whiplash as Yazoo does her best to get airborne. The camera boat driver has to jam the throttle open in a hurry to catch up with the action as the test yacht disappears rapidly toward the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

The way Yazoo is laid out, everything easily to hand, control under spinnaker at speed proves effortless. As the helm loads a little as tonnes of ocean whizz by beneath, the crew enjoy their work in keeping spinnaker and main working to the maximum.

Deck

The Elliott 6.5 is laid out very similarly to the immensely-popular 5.9 — being very simple and very functional.

All the sail controls run to the cockpit through roller bearing blocks to Cleveco servo cleats. Two Maxwell 16 winches on the cabintop are rarely needed, the jib sheets having 2:1 purchase systems and the rest of the controls being easily hand operated on this light displacement trailer yacht.

The centreboard winch is mounted for'ard in the cockpit. It has a removable handle to reduce its nuisance factor while sailing, the board being locked down as soon as Yazoo leaves the launching ramp.

The outboard well is positioned just for'ard of the full-width mainsheet traveller. This well is a real trap for the

novice mainsheet hand who, after stepping into the ocean a couple of times quickly learns to step only on solid cockpit flooring. With a sealed bottom the well provides negligible drag once the engine is not in use.

The mainsheet system is very simple to use, being a 5:1 ratchet block system centrally mounted. The traveller controls are so positioned to allow the helmsman, as well as the mainsheet hand, easy access.

The stern-mounted rudder is robustly-pinned into a stainless steel frame. Throughout our test sail this setup showed no tendency to flop or flex under load, a weakness common to trailer yachts.

The mast is a Fosters F13 section with 5mm wire rigging and Graham rigging screws.

Construction

The hull is 12mm cedar strip planked with 7.5oz unidirectional glass on the outside and 6oz boat cloth on the inside.

The deck, cockpit, bulkheads, bunktops etc are all 6mm 5-ply, all beautifully constructed by McGee, he being a professional boatbuilder.

The centreboard is laminated kauri with a 90 X 50mm RSJ through the centre. The bulb on the bottom is the same as that used on the Elliott 5.9. The rudder blade is laminated cedar, sheathed with boat cloth — a very light, but strong, foil.

Summary

The Elliott 6.5 was born of Richard McGee's desire to build a small fast trailer yacht in cedar. As the Elliott 5.9 is restricted by class rules to stock GRP construction he asked designer Greg Elliott for a similar-sized design.

The 6.5 shares the same mainsail as the Elliott 5.9 but its slightly larger J (foretriangle base) measurement gives Yazoo more jib and spinnaker horsepower.

With an unmatched racing pedigree (Yazoo holds the scratch handicap with the New Zealand Trailer Yacht Association as well as her two national championship titles) this 6.5m trailer yacht consistently beats much larger yachts around the race track.

Building in cedar allows easy home construction at a price most can afford.

The outstanding performance and casual approach to accommodation (there isn't any to speak of) make this a racing sailor's yacht.

When it comes to a sparkling day sail, the 6.5 is hard to beat. On our perfect test day, we almost had to call the new police boat to drive truant workers back to their work place.

The yacht, despite its performance, is never a handful — always being quite predictable and returning with interest any efforts to improve performance.

After an exhilarating afternoon aboard Yazoo it is easy to understand why there are now seven sailing and a further five under construction.

The very simple cockpit layout means most sailing operations can be performed without the crew having to move from their side-deck perch.

The vitals

LOA	6.42m (21ft)
LWL	6m (19ft 8ins)
Beam	2.42m (7ft 11ins)
Draft (board down)	1.2m (3ft 11ins)
Ballast.....	220kgs (485lbs)
Displacement.....	670kgs (1477lbs)
Designer.....	Greg Elliott
Builder	Richard McGee
Sails.....	North Sails
Engine	Yamaha 5hp
Winches	Maxwell
Mast	Fosters